

April 8, 2010

TO: Members of the Transit Committee

FROM: Marc Pearsall, Transit Planner III

SUBJECT: ACCEPTANCE OF THE COMMUTER RAIL STUDY FINDINGS

In 2008, the MAG Regional Council approved the Commuter Rail Strategic Planning Study that identified the need for three additional commuter planning studies (Studies) to further define requirements and steps to plan and implement commuter rail service in the MAG region. Since November 2008, MAG has been developing these commuter rail studies to further evaluate the feasibility of the technology in the region. A brief summary of each study follows.

The Commuter Rail System Study reviews potential corridors and options identified in the Commuter Rail Strategic Plan and explores parallel existing freight and commuter rail. The System Study establishes priorities for implementing commuter rail service and evaluates ridership potential, ridership forecasting, operating strategies, cost effectiveness, capital and operating costs, vehicle technology, and implementation strategies in creating a recommended 110-mile system. Additionally, revising the corridor ranking included in the Commuter Rail System Study will commence upon the completion of updated regional socioeconomic forecasts.

The Grand Avenue Commuter Rail Corridor Development Plan Study evaluates the potential to implement commuter rail service within the existing BNSF Railway (formerly Burlington Northern Santa Fe) right of way between the Town of Wickenburg and downtown Phoenix. The planning process includes a review of the existing and future conditions, an inventory of the existing rail infrastructure as well as necessary infrastructure improvements to implement parallel commuter rail service. A conceptual commuter rail operating plan has been developed as a part of the study.

The Yuma West Corridor Plan evaluates the potential to implement commuter rail service within the existing Union Pacific Railroad right of way between downtown Phoenix and the community of Arlington in the Southwest Valley. The planning process includes a review of existing and future conditions, an inventory of the existing rail infrastructure as well as necessary infrastructure improvements to implement parallel commuter rail service. A conceptual commuter rail operating plan has been developed as a part of the study.

The studies also present a timetable for next steps. The first set of recommendations between 2010 and 2015 specify the following:

- Passage of enabling legislation relative to liability and indemnification,
- Coordination with railroads and develop of partnerships to investigate options for a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU),
- Advancement of the design and operating costs,
- MAG coordination with ADOT on the upcoming Phoenix-Tucson Alternatives Analysis,

- Initiation of collaborative local planning efforts,
- Identification of funding commitments,
- Initiation of the process for federal funding,
- Development of a governance plan and,
- Preserving future corridor options.

The studies also present longer term next step plans for 2015 and beyond, including:

- A formalized partnership with railroads,
- Obtaining committed funding sources such as local and federal,
- Designing, constructing, and operating an initial commuter rail system and,
- Further planning to develop a seamless transportation system and meet regional sustainable goals.

### REQUESTED ACTION

- I. 1) Accept the findings of the MAG Commuter Rail System Study, Grand Avenue Commuter Rail Corridor Development Plan Study and Yuma West Commuter Rail Corridor Development Plan Study for the MAG region and; 2) Revise the corridor ranking included in the Commuter Rail System Study upon the completion of updated regional socioeconomic forecasts.

If you have any questions or comments please contact me at by telephone at (602) 254-6300 or by email at [mpearsall@mag.maricopa.gov](mailto:mpearsall@mag.maricopa.gov).